

It gives me great pleasure to join you here to-day to launch Canada Export Trade Month. The last several months and in particular this last week has been extremely hectic, but it is obvious to all that this government places the highest priority on trade.

While October is officially Export Trade Month, I want you to understand the importance of exports and trade to you and to our government every month --- because trade means jobs and jobs are our number one priority.

Export Trade Month is a co-operative program. It involves business people, educators and trade officials in various departments and agencies of the federal and provincial governments. This co-operation is evidence of the growing consensus in Canada that our future prosperity is dependent upon improving our export performance.

The thrust of the Export Trade Month program relates directly to these objectives. The spirit of co-operation is demonstrated here today by the variety of associations, departments, crown corporations and business people.

We are attempting to raise public awareness across the country of the critical role played by export trade in our national economy. Something like two million Canadian jobs depend on export activity. Our message is that there is a direct link between export activity and economic health. We want that relationship to be understood by every Canadian.

I believe that Members of Parliament carry a special responsibility to work with and encourage companies in their constituencies to consider the international market place. Members of the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade are reviewing our trade programs and services in order to better assist the exporting community.

We are also communicating with the business community -- in particular, the small- and medium-sized business enterprises which provide the vast majority of new jobs in Canada -- to make them aware of the opportunities that exist in the international market place.